



CRAIG HICKMAN 2017-10-06

BATAILLE'S GIFT: WEALTH, TOXICITY, AND APOCALYPSE

NECROPOLITICS APOCALYPTIC, BATAILLE, TOXIC TIME, WASTE, WEALTH

Is the general determination of energy circulating in the biosphere altered by man's activity? Or rather, isn't the latter's intention vitiated by a determination of which it is ignorant, which it overlooks and cannot change?

—Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*

Bataille's underlying understanding of the checks and balances in the universe in its indifferent and impersonal forms would inform his pragmatic approach to the economics of the Anthropocene:

The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g., an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically.

Capital accumulation as performed by the top .01% which hordes its surplus profits (the excess energy (wealth)) brings with it a counter-current or entropic and toxic accumulation of catastrophe in the earth itself which has to be absorbed, spent, and willingly or not "lost without profit" else like other civilizations before it the earth's resources will reach that point where its own accumulated toxicity must be wasted utterly in catastrophic apocalypse to the detriment of all biotic life on the surface of this planet.

Yet, as Bataille affirms:

Minds accustomed to seeing the development of productive forces as the ideal end of activity refuse to recognize that energy, which constitutes wealth, must ultimately be spent lavishly (without return), and that a series of profitable operations has absolutely no other effect than the squandering of profits. To affirm that it is necessary to, dissipate a substantial portion of energy produced, sending it up in smoke, is to go against judgments that form the basis of a rational economy.

We as humans cannot accept the inevitability of this coming catastrophe which has already happened in the retroactive

interventions of accumulated wealth and excess toxicity throughout this profit/loss sequence of human society from its beginnings in Agricultural civilization till now as it accelerates out of Industrial civilization and into the interminable flows of our current virtual, internalized, and financial global network civilization based on convergence technologies.

The debt will be paid willingly or not...

As Bataille puts it succinctly, "when one considers the totality of productive wealth on the surface of the globe, it is evident that the products of this wealth can be employed for productive ends only insofar as the living organism that is economic mankind can increase its equipment. This is not entirely – neither always nor indefinitely – possible. A surplus must be dissipated through deficit operations: *The final dissipation cannot fail to carry out the movement that animates terrestrial energy.*" Because of this or in excess of this we are condemned to "useless consumption": if he denies this then "the global movement of energy ... cannot accumulate limitlessly in the productive forces; eventually, like a river into the sea, it is bound to escape us and be lost to us" (16).

Incomprehension does not change the final outcome in the slightest. We can ignore or forget the fact that the ground we live on is little other than a field of multiple destructions.

In the final resolution of this law of universal excess and waste we will either actively participate in the destruction, or "if we do not have the force to destroy the surplus energy ourselves, it cannot be used, and, like an unbroken animal that cannot be trained, it is this energy that destroys us; it is we who pay the price of the inevitable explosion" (17). Knowing this ancient societies found relief in festivals; some erected admirable monuments that had no useful purpose; we use the excess to multiply "services" that make life smoother, and we are led to reabsorb part of it by increasing leisure time. (17 Yet, nothing suffices and the remainder or excess beyond such diversions condemns humans in all ages to the doom and destruction of perpetual wars against their own kind. (17) Will we overcome this inevitability, find another path forward; or, end as all great empires have ended on the dung heap of lost or destroyed civilizations?

The very growth and expansion of capitalist society across the globe gave us the "extraordinary intensity" of the two world-wars. And, even now, it is working its intensity toward another global civil war unless as Bataille suggested decades ago:

We can express the hope of avoiding a war that already threatens. But in order to do so we must divert the surplus production, either into the rational extension of a difficult industrial growth, or into unproductive works that will dissipate an energy that cannot be accumulated in any case. (18)

In this sense the Age of Solar Exploration and the expansion into our solar system is the prime avenue in which we could and should dissipate this otherwise accumulated energy. Some will see it as an unproductive and fruitless enterprise, and yet it is this very excess and waste of the capitalist accumulation that needs to be done and accelerated to overcome both the decay, ruination, and catastrophe of unused and surplus energy. Otherwise it will still be dissipated and at the detriment of all living things on the planet in a global civil war. What this means to Bataille and for us is that we are now left with little option but to realize that the "extension of economic growth itself requires the overturning of economic principles – the overturning of the ethics that grounds them" (18). We are in the midst of a global transition that will require nothing less than the overturning of capitalist civilization and the transformation and mutation of a general opening to a new solar economy based on expansion into space.

Universal Basic Income? Bataille offers another modified aspect to this path forward:

Henceforth, leaving aside pure and simple dissipation, analogous to the construction of the Pyramids, the possibility of pursuing growth is itself subordinated to giving: The industrial development of the entire world demands of Americans that they lucidly grasp the necessity, for an economy such as theirs, of having a margin of profitless operations. (19)

In other words if the global economy were to support a universal income and offer of jobs, not work (or salaried expectation) in the next stage of economic transformation into a Space faring civilization; transitioning into our Solar System in the sense of FDR's Works Projects, which gave tens of thousands of jobs to out-of-work and poverty stricken humans during the depression. On this model both work and income would benefit all concerned in growing a space based civilization no longer bound to the *restrictive* war based economies of the twentieth century. Overcoming war through mutual cooperation among the globes competing nations aligning as we did with America/Russian during the Space Station era. In this way even old enemies – who seem now bent of waging civil war for the remaining resources of the planet, could be brought into alignment and persuaded to cooperate with each other under a larger umbrella effort of a multi-pluralistic regime of Interplanetary economic gain and expansion, if both resources and work and income were allocated in a contractual agreement toward off-world mutual benefit for all involved.

Ultimately such a state of affairs will only come about as the Cognitariat – the knowledge workers, engineers, and workers of the planet all unite and invent this culture of off-world planetary transformation as a possibility. Envisioning this through essay, theory-fiction, science fiction, performance art, music, and every other aesthetic and network related system could such a leap forward in human thinking come about.

So the question we must ask ourselves is will we allow ourselves to continue to accumulate the toxic ruins of capital and end in a centuries long civil war and military or climacteric apocalypse, or will we choose to cooperate and invent a future worth living in that chooses to spend our cognitive wealth in expanding off-world and into the cosmos?

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